THE BEGINNING OF TOMORROW!

JUSTICE LEAGUE TASK FORCE™

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OCT 94

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

BY WAID, VELLUTO & ALBRECHT

Velluto Albrecht

WELCOME TO IVOTOWN.

IVO'S

...VVMMMMMM

POPULATION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-THREE...

MMMRRRRRRRRRRRRR

...AND FALLING...

RRRRRRRRROOOOOMM

...THANKS TO J'ONN J'ONZZ...

...LEADER OF THE ALL-NEW JUSTICE LEAGUE TASK FORCE!

HUH?

WOOOOOOOOOSSHHOOOOOOOOOM

THE GATHERING

STORY: MARK WAID
PENCILS: SAL VELLUTO
INKS: JEFF ALBRECHT
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WHAT IN THE WORLD?

STEAM... LAVA...

ALL I REALLY NEED TO KNOW I LEARNED IN KINDERGARTEN

I DON'T UNDERSTAND. IS THIS ISLAND POPULATED--

--WHUFF!--

--OR NOT?

NOT--

--NNNNNNGH!--

--BY HUMANS. IT WAS ONCE THE REFUGE OF AN OLD LEAGUE ENEMY--PROFESSOR IVO.

...CAUSING CARNAGE FOR THE SAKE OF CARNAGE SEEMS SO UNLIKE YOU, J'ONN.

MY UNIQUE GRACE IN THESE HARSH TIMES, I SUPPOSE. ACTUALLY, I'M DIGGING A GEOTHERMAL TAP.

IF THE LEAGUE IS TO BE HEADQUARTERED ON THIS ISLAND, L-RON, WE'LL NEED A STEADY SOURCE OF POWER...

ASHAMED OF HIS HORRIFIC APPEARANCE, IVO BUILT THIS TOWN FAR OFF THE COAST OF WHAT WE CALL THE CAROLINAS...

...USING HIS ROBOTS AND MOVIELIKE SETS TO REPLICATE A SUBURBAN COMFORT ZONE.

...AND DAMN THE ROBOT DENIZENS, EH? THIS SITE IS CRAWLING WITH ARTIFICIAL LIFE. YOU'RE CERTAIN NO ONE ELSE RESIDES HERE?

POSITIVE. NOW--HELP ME ANCHOR THIS TURBINE.

IN MEMORY OF THE LATE ICE, WHO CURED HIM OF HIS FREAKISH GROTESQUERIE AND REFORMED HIM, HE BEQUEATHED THIS ISLE TO THE LEAGUE.

GIVEN ITS WIDE-OPEN SETTING, I BELIEVE IT TO BE THE PERFECT TRAINING GROUND FOR THE LEAGUE MEMBERS OF TOMORROW.

PERHAPS... BUT THAT'S NO EXCUSE TO BE SO CASUAL WITH THE NATIVES, J'ONN.

YOUR FEELINGS OF KINSHIP WITH THE ROBOTS ARE NOTED, L-RON... THOUGH PERHAPS OVERSTATED.

UNLIKE IVO'S CONSTRUCTS, YOUR COMPUTERLIKE BRAIN RESIDES IN A PHYSIQUE OF FLESH AND BLOOD--AND ENJOYS A CAPACITY FOR LEARNING.

WHAT HAVE THESE BOOKS TAUGHT YOU?

LIFE 101 John Naylor and Peter McWilliams

HOW TO WIN FRIENDS AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE

SURPRISINGLY LITTLE ABOUT LIVING OUT MY DAYS INSIDE THE BODY OF THE GALAXY'S GREATEST SCOURGE.

EVER SINCE MY BIOELECTRIC MIND WAS IMPRINTED ONTO THE BRAIN OF THE SINISTER DESPERO, I HAVE SEARCHED THE COSMOS FOR INSIGHTS INTO MY NEW CONDITION.

THIS FORM SEEMS CLUMSY-- UNWIELDY-- WHILE AT THE SAME TIME, SUPREMELY POWERFUL. WHAT SORT OF THINGS IS IT--

--AM I--

--CAPABLE OF, J'ONN?

WE'LL LEARN TOGETHER. YOU, MYSELF, AND THE OTHERS.

"OTHERS"? WHO WILL JOIN US?

LET'S GO FIND OUT.

IVY UNIVERSITY

McIntyre.

It is with great disappointment that we ran-
ot your application to our school. We have
he maximum number of students allowable

e deadline for our Fall 1995 admission is
We look forward to seeing your applica
you for your interest in Ivy Univ

Ann
of Adm

SEVENTY-FIVE.

uOson University

. McIntyre,
Please accept our condolences, as
t accept your application to our
y. Your most recent transcripts
ten years old. Furthermore, your
s not demonstrate sufficient
ence.
ope that you will consider
nce you have met our admission

Roland Ha

SEVENTY-SIX.

MIDWESTERN UNIVERSITY

Mr. McIntyre,
Thank you for your interest in MidW
University. It is unfortunate that we cannot
your application, as you have not met our au
criteria. Although we have students like yo
have been out of school for several ye
work/life experience has been minimal. I
reapply once you have the standard crede

Abra
De

AND SEVENTY-SEVEN.

SO MUCH FOR ESTABLISHING A SECURE FUTURE.

HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL... BUT EVERY TIME I SEE A LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL...

...IT'S JUST THE HEADLAMP OF AN ONCOMING TRAIN.

AHHH... SCREW IT. TODAY IS THE FIRST DAY OF THE REST OF MY LUNCH...

WILL? WILL, ARE YOU HERE?

TRIUMPH?

IT'S MERELY A HOLDOVER FROM THE DAYS SHORTLY AFTER I WAS TORN AWAY FROM THE REST OF THE MARTIAN RACE... DRAWN TO YOUR WORLD BY A MALFUNCTIONING TELEPORT DEVICE.

BACK THEN... AT A TIME BEFORE SUPERMAN. WHEN EARTHLINGS WERE LESS ACCEPTING OF ALIENS... I MAINTAINED A TERRAN IDENTITY.

SOMEONE HAS BEEN RIFLING THROUGH YOUR MAIL!

THEY'RE MY DISCARDED LETTERS, DESPERO--

--SORRY--

--L-RON.

REJECTED APPLICATIONS FROM EVERY GRAD PROGRAM ON THE PLANET.

TOUGH GETTING BACK INTO SCHOOL WHEN YOUR TRANSCRIPTS ARE AS OUT-OF-DATE AS MINE.

BY DAY, I WORKED AS A POLICE DETECTIVE. BY NIGHT, I STARED AT THE STARS AND LONGED FOR THE DAY I MIGHT...

...

NOT IMPORTANT. FORGIVE ME FOR DWELLING ON YESTERDAYS WHEN TOMORROWS ARE FAR MORE VITAL.

I HAVE DECIDED, WITH L-RON, TO FORGE A NEW JUSTICE LEAGUE FROM THE ASHES OF THE OLD. WILL YOU JOIN US?

CAN'T SEE WHAT'S STOPPING ME.

JUST AS WELL, PROBABLY. I AM A BIT OF A RELIC.

THAT ALIEN TIME-FLUX THREW ME INTO A TWILIGHT STASIS FOR SO LONG, I JUST TODAY LEARNED THAT A LAPTOP ISN'T WHERE SANTA HEARS WISHES.

BACK IN THE REAL WORLD AFTER SO MANY YEARS... NO FUTURE, NO PROSPECTS... I'VE BEEN FIRING OFF UNIVERSITY APPLICATIONS, SADLY, THUS FAR, EVERY ONE HAS BEEN A WHIFF.

AFTER ALL, I HAVEN'T GOT A DAMN THING ELSE GOING ON IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE...

BUT THEN, AT LEAST I HAVE A MAILING ADDRESS FOR REJECTIONS. THANKS FOR THE USE OF YOUR HOME, J'ONN.

YOU'RE WELCOME... THOUGH A COLORADO CABIN IS HARDLY MY TRUE HOME.

KLACK BRRINNG BRRINNG TKK

YOU HAVE REACHED THE RESIDENCE OF JOHN JONES. PLEASE LEAVE A MESSAGE. =BEEP=

OH, GEEZ... I HOPE THIS IS THE RIGHT NUMBER...

...WILL? WILL McINTYRE? RUSTY WELLS! I SAW YOU ON THE TUBE, MAN! YOU HAVEN'T AGED A DAY!

LISTEN, I DON'T KNOW WHERE YOU'VE BEEN... I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING RUNNING AROUND IN TIGHTS... BUT I DO KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE!

CALL ME, MAN-- AND I PROMISE TO ROCK YOUR WORLD!

FORGIVE THE TELEPATHIC INTRUSION, L-RON... BUT I WISH TO KEEP THIS NEXT CONVERSATION PRIVATE.

TELL ME... DID WILL SOUND BITTER TO YOU?

BITTER... FORGIVABLY. HIS ABILITY TO MANIPULATE THE EARTH'S MAGNETIC FIELD GRANTS HIM A WIDE ARRAY OF IMPRESSIVE POWERS.

TRIUMPH DEBUTED YEARS AGO. HE COULD HAVE BEEN... PERHAPS SHOULD HAVE BEEN... THE FIRST GREAT CHAMPION OF THE MODERN HEROIC AGE.

INSTEAD, A COSMIC ACCIDENT PULLED HIM OUT OF TIME... AND OUT OF OUR MEMORIES. HELD IN LIMBO, HE LANGUISHED FORGOTTEN WHILE THOSE WHO CAME AFTER HIM BECAME LEGENDS.

NOT A CONCEPT I'M FAMILIAR WITH. BITTER HOW?

HIS HEART SEEMS NOBLE... BUT IT ALSO HOLDS A GREAT DEAL OF ANGER.

SHOULD TRIUMPH EVER DECIDE FOR CERTAIN THAT HE WAS CHEATED OF HIS DESTINY... I WORRY THAT NO FORCE ON EARTH WILL BE ABLE TO CONTAIN HIS RAGE.

HYA

:WHUFF!:

WHAT WAS THAT?

WHAT ARE YOU, NINETY-TWO? MY MAILMAN COULD BLOCK THAT ATTACK! FORGET TELLING ANYONE BRONZE TIGER WAS YOUR TEACHER.

I COULDN'T TAKE THE SHAME!

PARDON ME, OH GREAT AND POWERFUL BRONZE. I GOT DISTRACTED.

YOUR FIRST MISTAKE! CONCENTRATION IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENT OF MARTIAL TRAINING!

YEAH?

TELL THEM THAT!

HELLO, BEN. I SEE YOU'VE SET UP A DOJO. HOW IS CHICAGO?

TO YOUR UNFRIENDLY.

I KNOW WHY YOU'VE COME, J'ONN-- AND YOU CAN JUST TURN AROUND. GYPSY WANTS NOTHING TO DO WITH--

EX-CUSE ME. ARE YOU SPEAKING FOR ME NOW? I THINK NOT.

YOU WANT TO TALK, J'ONN? GREAT. WE'VE GOT A LOT TO TALK ABOUT.

YOU LEFT ME IN A SNOWBANK.

I KNOW. BUT--

I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO DIE!

--I KNOW, BUT--

SO I QUIT THE TEAM AND YOU DIDN'T CHASE ME.

AND NOW YOU'VE STARTED A NEW TEAM WITHOUT ME!

--MUST WE TALK ABOUT THIS SO PUBLICLY?

AND... AND... YOU'VE RECRUITED DESPERO!

I KNOW, BUT--

--I KNOW, BUT--

AND YOU'RE AWARE HE AND I HAVE A HISTORY.

--I--

--I--

--SO YOU WON'T COME.

OF COURSE I WILL. I JUST WANTED TO MAKE A FEW POINTS FIRST.

I... SEE. BEN, YOU'RE WELCOME TO JOIN US...

--I'D HAVE TO LIKE YOU MORE... AND GIVEN THIS TURN OF EVENTS, I'M NOT THRILLED WITH YOU OR YOUR LITTLE CLUB.

DON'T GET TIGHT. I'LL BE BACK. MISS ME.

HOW CAN I NOT?

DID YOU ENJOY THAT?

WHICH? THE KISS OR THE LOOK ON YOUR FACE?

SHUT UP AND FLY.

SO WHAT'S HER STORY?

SHE IS CALLED GYPSY. HER POWER-- BESIDES THE UNIQUE ABILITY TO RATTLE J'ONN-- IS ONE OF GREAT STEALTH. SHE SURPRISES HER FOES BY MOVING VIRTUALLY UNSEEN.

SHE DOESN'T LIKE ME.

BECAUSE...?

BECAUSE DESPERO KILLED HER PARENTS. AND THOUGH MY MIND HAS REPLACED HIS... THOUGH I NOW CONTROL HIS FORM... THE MERE SIGHT OF ME CONJURES UNPLEASANT MEMORIES FOR HER.

WELL, SWELL. ONLY FOUR STRONG, AND ALREADY WE'RE DYSFUNCTIONAL.

J'ONN! WHAT'S THE NEXT STOP ON OUR CROSS-COUNTRY TOUR?

PHILADELPHIA. I'VE ONE LAST HERO I WISH TO RECRUIT... THOUGH I WONDER HOW AMENABLE HE'LL BE TO THE IDEA OF JOINING A TEAM. FROM WHAT I GATHER...

OH, GOD...

...THE RAY IS QUITE CAPABLE AS A SOLO AGENT!

UNNNGH!

WOOSH

ICE HIM AGAIN.

THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY.

WE PROMISED TO BRING YOU BACK ALIVE, RAY...

...AND CABAL KEEPS ITS PROMISES!

FOR YOUR OWN GOOD, SURRENDER... AND COME WITH US!

LIKE HELL!

THE ONLY PLACE I'M GOING, ICEBOY, IS DOWN YOUR THROAT AND OUT YOUR--

--AAAAAAAGH!

NOT ICE SONICS?!

MASH HIM.

DONE

WHICH WAY IS UP, RAY?

IT DOESN'T MATTER UP, DOWN, OR SIDEWAYS--

--THERE IS NO ESCAPE!

CAN'T-- BREATHE! SNUFF!!

--KEEP THESE RATBAGS STRAIGHT.

THWAK

WOW. IT TAKES FIVE OF YOU TO BE THAT WRONG?

RAY! WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE?

J'ONN! THANK GOD YOU'RE

--KOFF!--

--I MEAN-- GOOD TO SEE YOU!

ME, I'M JUST BUZZING THE SKY, AIRING OUT MY HEAD, AND SUDDENLY--

-THERE'S TROUBLE IN THE HOUSE!

LOOK OUT!

FWOOSH

AAARRGH!

KEEP A SHARP EYE! ALL FIVE LOOK EXACTLY ALIKE-- BUT EACH ONE SPORTS A DIFFERENT SUPER-POWER!

SONIC BLASTS, ICE POWERS, SUPER-STRENGTH... HELL, I CAN'T KEEP 'EM STRAIGHT!

JUST HIT 'EM!

THE PYRO AGAIN? GREAT. MAGNETIC FORCE ISN'T MUCH GOOD AGAINST RAW HEAT!

"SURE HOPE THE OTHERS ARE FARING BETTER!"

WHAT? YOU-YOU'RE--

IMMATERIAL-- AS ARE YOUR THREATS.

CAREFUL, JONN! WE'VE YET TO DETERMINE WHO THE SUPER-STRONG ONE--

THWAM

--IS!

NEVER MIND.

AAARRRR!

WHAM

BEAUTY! THAT'S THREE SPOKEN FOR--AND SONIXX, THE BOOM-BOX THAT WALKED LIKE A MAN, MAKES FOUR!

HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE ON THE DEFENSE, LOUDMOUTH!

FWAM

OH, MY, J'ONN... WHAT DID YOU TALK ME INTO?

MY CAMOUFLAGE SKILLS ARE AWFULLY TAME COMPARED TO THE POWERS OF...WELL, EVERYONE ELSE. WHAT WERE YOU THINKING?

ACTUALLY, THAT WASN'T TOO BAD!

HE'S DOWN--MEANING WE'VE ACCOUNTED FOR ALL FIVE!

THAT EVERY TEAM NEEDS ITS AQUAMAN?

FWAK

ALL THAT'S LEFT IS TO MOP THEM UP NOW THAT WE'VE ENDED THE...

...CONFUSION...

DAMN IT!

WE LOST COUNT OF THE POWERS!

SHADOW PROJECTION! CAN ANYONE SEE?

NO FURTHER THAN THE END OF MY OLFACTORY SENSOR, J'ONN!

THEN COVER YOUR VISUAL ORGANS, PINKY

--AND I'LL SHED A LITTLE LIGHT!

FA-CHOOOM!

READY TO RESUME BATTLE, EH, MARTIAN?

SADLY, I BELIEVE YOU'VE MISTAKEN ME--

KR

AAARRGH!

J'ONN!

FOR SOMEONE ELSE!

FWOOSH

PFFF

J'ONN, ARE YOU--?

MY VULNERABILITY TO FLAME IS MORE PSYCHOLOGICAL THAN PHYSICAL, GYPSY. I'M FINE... BUT OUR FIGHT IS FAR FROM OVER!

OUR FOES TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE DARKNESS TO ONCE MORE SWITCH OPPONENTS!

I DON'T GET IT! HOW CAN THEY TELL EACH OTHER APART IN THIS CHAOS?

AN EXCELLENT QUESTION.

BY CONCENTRATING, I SENSE AN AMBIENT TELEPATHY OF SORTS--

--A CYBERNETIC LINK GENERATED BY THEIR ARMOR!

TRIUMPH, QUICKLY! SCRAMBLE THEIR SIGNAL--

--WITH AN ELECTROMAGNETIC PULSE!

NYARRGGH!

SQUEEE

SQUARK

AIEEEEE!

THST

OH, MAN!

LOST YOU GUYS FOR A MOMENT! EVERYONE HERE?

HEAD COUNT! ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR, FIVE, SI--?

HEY-- WAIT A MINUTE...

JUST PLAYING THROUGH...

WHY, YOU SHAPE-SHIFTING SON OF A--

--TOGETHER, MEN! GIVE HIM ALL YOU'VE GOT!

ONE--

--TWO--

--TWO AND A HALF--

--TWO AND THREE-QUARTERS--

--WHAT ARE WE COUNTING? I.Q.s?

APPARENTLY-- IF THESE YUTZES WERE *STUPID* ENOUGH TO LET J'ONN *GROUP* THEM!

WE'VE GOT 'EM *PENNED!* GOOD *PLAN,* J'ONN!

MINE, ACTUALLY.

J'ONN'S NOT THE *ONLY* ONE WHO RECOGNIZES THE VALUE OF *SUBTERFUGE.*

EITHER WAY, THE COMPLIMENT *STANDS.*

RAY'S *HARD LIGHT DOME* SHOULD KEEP THEM *CAPTIVE...*

"...UNTIL THE AUTHORITIES ARRIVE!"

Belle Reve METAHUMAN HOLDING FACILITY

...HAVEN'T CLUE ONE WHAT THEY WANTED WITH ME. MAYBE THEY'LL TALK TO THE FEDS...

...SO...HOW... MUCH OF THE FIGHT... DID YOU... SEE BEFORE YOU BROKE IN?

THE PART WHERE I HAD MY HEAD UP MY BUTT?

THE PART WHERE MY BATTLE STRATEGY TOOK OUT A GOOD HUMOR TRUCK?

THE PART WHERE I JAMMED MY FINGER AND WANTED TO CRY?

OR WHATEVER PART MOST CONVINCED J'ONN THAT I WAS A WORTHLESS DWEEB?

THE PART WHERE YOU REFUSED TO GIVE UP, REGARDLESS OF THE ODDS AGAINST YOU.

OH.

THAT PART.

THE COURAGE YOU SHOWED WAS INSPIRING. WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO REJOIN THE LEAGUE... AND SHARE THAT BRAVERY WITH OTHERS?

ME?

I WOULD CONSIDER IT A FAVOR.

I...

...WELL...

...SURE!

TRIUMPH.

RAY.

CALL ME WILL.

CALL ME...UMM... RAY...

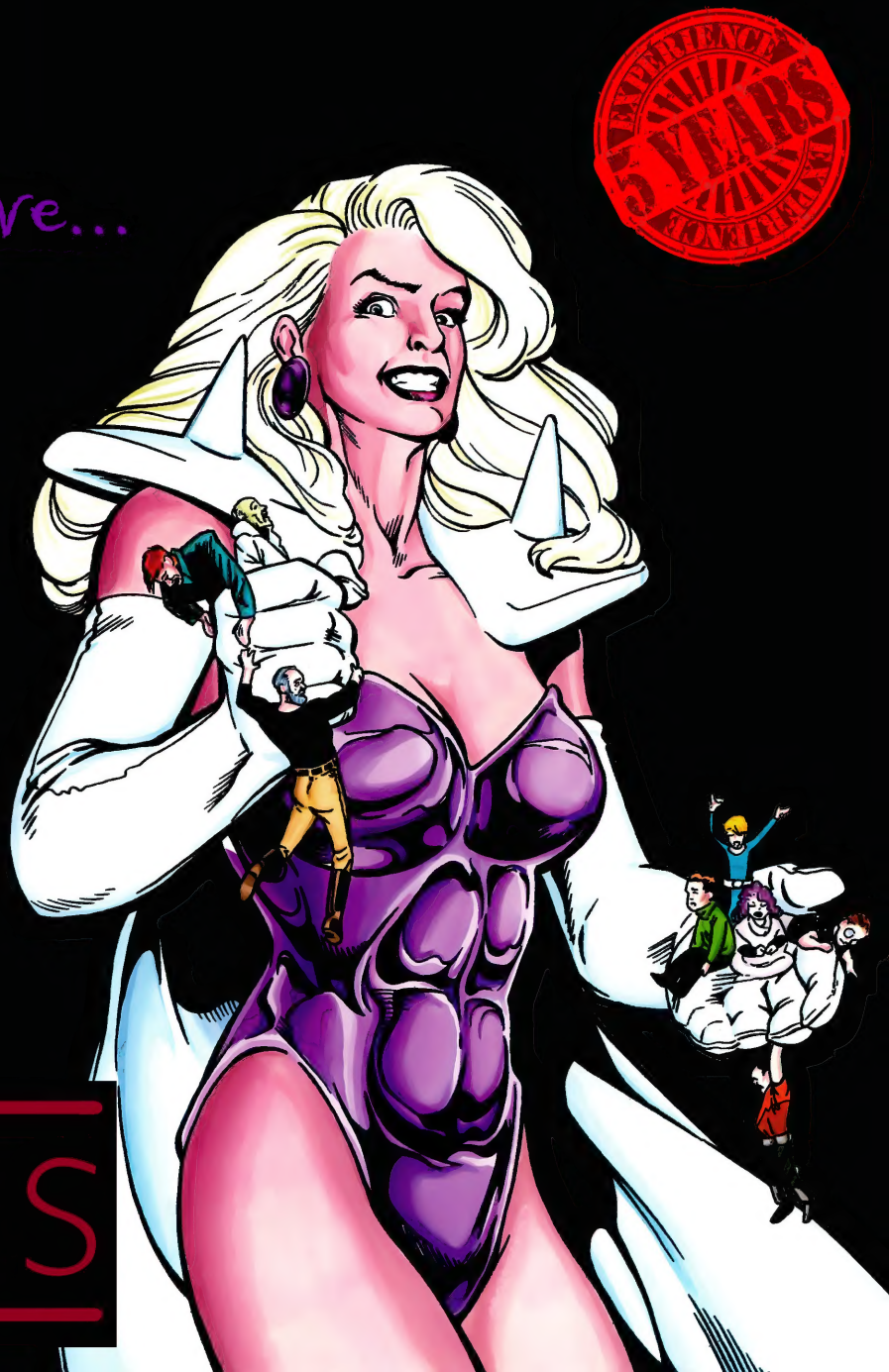
WELL HANDLED. IS DIPLOMACY A NATURAL MARTIAN TALENT?

RATHER AN ACQUIRED ONE...THOUGH IT SERVES. THE BOY HAS FAR TO GO... BUT, TO HIS CREDIT, HE IS EAGER TO LEARN.

HE'LL DO JUST FINE...

...SO LONG AS WE KEEP HIM AWAY FROM THE GOOD HUMOR TRUCKS.

From Baaldur, with love...



GLORITH

novus